A **bias** is a tendency, inclination, or prejudice toward or against something or someone.

* [https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/basics/bias](https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/basics/bias)
Implicit or unconscious bias

We categorise people and assign positive or negative value to those categories (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Biases become fixed in our thought processes and are accessed automatically and unconsciously (Bodenhausen and McCrae, 1998).

Biases develop from and are sustained through our culture and our experiences.
Bias is human

Everyone is biased and tends to have a bias blind spot.

We see biases much better in others than in ourselves (Pronin et al., 2002).

Biases are most easily triggered under cognitive or emotional load, tiredness or hunger.
Some types of biases

✓ Affinity bias
✓ Attribution bias
✓ Confirmation bias
✓ Conformity bias
✓ Halo and horns effects
Affinity bias

Inclination to prefer people that are similar to oneself or have something in common with oneself or someone one likes.
Attribution bias

A self-serving tendency to attribute one’s successes to one’s intelligence and personality, but one’s failures to situational and external factors, or other’s successes to situational and external factors.

https://didthisreallyhappen.net/
Confirmation bias

Once one has an opinion, one seeks out information to confirm the opinion and unconsciously ignores evidence to the contrary.
Conformity bias

Caused by peer group pressure.

An individual who feels most of the group leaning towards or away from a certain position may tend to go along with what the group thinks rather than voice their own opinion.
Halo and horns effects

If one **likes one characteristic** of an individual, one may have a **more positive view** of their other characteristics.

If one **does not like one characteristic** of an individual, one may have a **more negative view** of their other characteristics.

Some examples of bias in evaluations

✓ Gender
✓ Expertise and ‘airtime’
✓ Authors’ names
✓ Names and ethnicity
Gender bias in evaluations

Independence
“The role and independence of women in strong research teams was more often questioned and in a way that did not apply to men to the same extent.”

Collaboration and private relationships
“Private relationships with co-applicants named in the application were more often taken up for discussion when a woman applied for a grant, compared with when a man did.”

Descriptions
“For men put forward to receive funding, recurrent descriptions were ‘well-known’, ‘respected’, and ‘established’ (...). Instead, for women terms like ‘good’/‘strong’/‘solid track record’ and ‘high novelty’ were more frequent.”
Expertise and “airtime”

When a panel member is recognised as the expert, 62% of the time their opinion will be followed by the group (Baumann and Bonner, 2004).

When the group does not recognise the expert, they listen to the most extroverted person.
Evidence of bias in peer review:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation to reject</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prominent researcher</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymised</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little-known author</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Huber, J. et al., 2022, [https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-03256-9](https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-03256-9)
Evidence of over 12,000 job applications for leadership positions in Australia, with **identical resumes** for applicants with English or non-English names:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin of name</th>
<th>Positive response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Panel meeting: reduce bias triggers

1. Know your own unconscious biases; test yourself*
2. Base your evaluations on clear criteria and be accountable for your opinions
3. Build in challenge and non-conformism (e.g., a ‘Devil’s Advocate’)
4. Pay attention to your “airtime” and fair distribution among panel members
5. Make sure everyone has the opportunity to contribute

* [https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html](https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html)
References


Huber, J. et al. (2022) Preprint at SSRN https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4190976


Jones P & Cornish T (2009). Thinking Fast & Slow: unconscious bias @ERCEA, Shire Professional Chartered Psychologists, training scientific officers. ERCEA Covent garden, Place Charles Rogier 16, Brussels


Video developed by the Catalan Research Centres Institute (CERCA) on unconscious bias in recruitment processes: Tackling gender bias in research institutes